

IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

1. (Withdrawn) A skin aging-preventing or improving agent which comprises a substance capable of enhancing the expression level of Rho kinase or myosin light-chain kinase.
2. (Withdrawn) A skin aging-preventing or improving agent which comprises a substance capable of enhancing the expression level of Rho kinase or myosin light-chain kinase.
3. (Withdrawn) The skin aging-preventing or improving agent according to claim 1, wherein the substance capable of enhancing the expression level of Rho kinase or myosin light-chain kinase is a plant selected from the group consisting of *Althaea officinalis*, *Curcuma longa*, *Actinidia chinensis*, *Gentiana lutea*, *Crataegus cuneata*, *Rehmannia glutinosa*, *Syzygium aromaticum*, *Calendula officinalis*, *Rose canina*, *Petroselinium sativum*, *Hamamelis virginiana*, *Asiasarum sieboldii*, *Thymus serpyllum*, *Hypericum perforatum*, *Sophora flavescens*, *Cnidium officinale*, *Zizyphus jujuba*, *Citrus unshiu*, *Angelica acutiloba*, *Fucus vesiculosus*, *Tilia platyllos*, *Humulus lupulus*, *Citrus limon*, *Cassia obtusifolia*, *Magnolia obovata*, *Evodia rutaecarpa*, *Schisandra chinensis*, *Cornus officinalis*, *Atractylodes japonica*, *Digenea simplex*, and mixtures thereof; or an extract thereof.
4. (Currently Amended) A method for treating aging of the skin or improving the skin, comprising:
  - contacting skin with an skin aging-preventing or improving agent thereby increasing an expression level of Rho kinase or myosin light-chain kinase in the skin;

wherein said agent comprises a substance capable of increasing an expression level of Rho kinase or myosin light-chain kinase;

wherein said substance capable of enhancing the expression level of Rho kinase or myosin light-chain kinase is a plant, a part of a plant, an extract of a plant, an extract of a part of a plant or a combination thereof, each plant being independently selected from the group consisting of *Althaea officinalis*, *Cureuma longa*, *Actinidia chinensis*, *Gentiana lutea*, *Crataegus uneata*, *Rehmannia glutinosa*, *Syzygium aromaticum*, *Calendula officinalis*, *Rose canina*, *Hamamelis virginiana*, *Asiasarum sieboldii*, *Thymus serpyllum*, *Hypericum perforatum*, *Sophora flavescens*, *Cnidium officinale*, *Citrus unshiu*, *Angelica acutiloba*, *Fucus vesiculosus*, *Tilia platyllos*, *Humulus lupulus*, *Citrus limon*, *Cassia obatusifolia*, *Magnolia obovata*, *Evodia rutaecarpa*, *Cornus officinalis*, *Atractylodes japonica*, *Digenea simplex*, and mixtures thereof;

wherein, if said substance is a plant, an amount of said plant as reduced to dry weight is 0.00001 to 5 wt.% based on the total amount of said agent; and

wherein, if said substance is an extract of said plant, an amount of said extract of said plant as reduced to solid content is 0.00001 to 5 wt.% based on the total amount of said agent.

5. (Withdrawn) A method for screening skin wrinkling- and sagging-improving agents, which method comprises incubating skin fibroblasts with a test substance, and measuring the amount of Rho kinase or myosin light-chain kinase expressed in the fibroblasts.

6. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 4, wherein said agent is applied to said skin in an amount of from 0.01 to 10 mg/cm<sup>2</sup>.

7. (Canceled)

8. (Withdrawn) The method according to claim 4, wherein said substance comprises a part of said plant.

9. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 4, wherein said substance capable of enhancing the expression level of Rho kinase or myosin light-chain kinase is a plant part selected from the group consisting of ~~root, rhizome, or leaf for *Althaea officinalis*; rhizome for *Cureuma longa*; fruit for *Actinidia chinensis*; root or rhizome for *Gentiana lutea*; fruit for *Crataegus cuneata*; root for *Rehmannia glutinosa*; bud for *Syzygium aromaticum*; head flower for *Calendula officinalis*; fruit for *Rose canina*; leaf or bark for *Hamamelis virginiana*; root or rhizome for *Asiasarum sieboldii*; aerial part for *Thymus serpyllum*; aerial part for *Hypericum perforatum*; root for *Sophora flavescens*; rhizome for *Cnidium officinale*; fruit skin for *Citrus unshiu*; root for *Angelica acutiloba*; whole plant for *Fucus vesiculosus*; flower or leaf for *Tilia platyllos*; female inflorescence for *Humulus lupulus*; fruit for *Citrus limon*; and the parts described in Japanese Pharmacopoeia for *Cassia obtusifolia*, *Magnolia obovata*, *Evodia rutaecarpa*, *Cornus officinalis*, *Atractylodes japonica*, and *Digeneasimplex*.~~

10. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 4, wherein said agent is in the form of a cream, an ointment, a gel, a lotion, a solution, a pack, or a foundation.

11. (Withdrawn) The method according to claim 4, wherein said substance is a plant.

12. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 4, wherein said substance is an extract of a plant.

13. (Withdrawn) The method according to claim 4, wherein said substance is said part of said plant.

14. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 4, wherein said substance is an extract of a part of a plant.

15. (Currently Amended) A method for treating aging of the skin or improving the skin, comprising:

contacting skin with an skin aging-preventing or improving agent thereby increasing an expression level of Rho kinase or myosin light-chain kinase in the skin;

wherein said agent comprises of a substance capable of increasing an expression level of Rho kinase or myosin light-chain kinase;

wherein said substance capable of enhancing the expression level of Rho kinase or myosin light-chain kinase is an extract of a plant part selected from the group consisting of ~~root, rhizome, or leaf for *Althaea officinalis*; rhizome for *Cureuma longa*; fruit for *Actinidia chinensis*; root or rhizome for *Gentiana lutea*; fruit for *Crataegus cuneata*; root for *Rehmannia glutinosa*; bud for *Syzygium aromaticum*; head flower for *Calendula officinalis*; fruit for *Rose canina*; leaf or bark for *Hamamelis virginiana*; root or rhizome for *Asiasarum sieboldii*; aerial part for *Thymus serpyllum*; aerial part for *Hypericum perforatum*; root for *Sophora flavescens*; rhizome for *Cnidium officinale*; fruit skin for *Citrus unshiu*; root for *Angelica acutiloba*; whole plant for *Fucus vesiculosus*; flower or leaf for *Tilia platyllos*; female inflorescence for *Humulus lupulus*; fruit for *Citrus limon*~~; and the parts described in

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Japanese Pharmacopoeia for *Cassia obatusifolia*, *Magnolia obovata*, *Evodia rutaecarpa*,

*Cornus officinalis*, *Atractylodes japonica*, and *Digeneasimplex*;

wherein an amount of said extract of a plant part as reduced to dry weight is 0.00001 to 5 wt.% based on the total amount of said agent.

16. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 15, wherein said agent is applied to said skin in an amount of from 0.01 to 10 mg/cm<sup>2</sup>.

17. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 15, wherein said agent is in the form of a cream, an ointment, a gel, a lotion, a solution, a pack, or a foundation.